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AUTHOR Eriaku, P. O.
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ABSTRACT

Uganda's education system was damaged and retarded by the military regime of the 1970's. About 50 percent of the primary school age children go to school and of these only 20 percent manage to proceed to secondary school. The ultimate number that manage to gain admission to the single university is 0.8 percent of these. Curriculum provides for an innovative change within an individual. Its implementation must be adjusted to suit the individual. Planning a curriculum necessitates its analysis as a first phase and must eventually end in its syntax before implementation. Administrative arrangements constitute what the Director of a Curriculum must add to a planned curriculum in order to develop it. Assessment of an individual's attainment is determined by and geared towards set objectives. Public examinations set at different levels in Uganda are confined more or less to the cognitive and affective domains of Bloom's taxonomy. (Author)

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CURRICULUM AND THE INDIVIDUAL - A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO UGANDA

P O ERIAKU

SECRETARY

UGANDA NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS BOARD

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CURRICULUM AND THE INDIVIDUAL

A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO UGANDA

Abstract of Paper Presented by Mr. P. O. Eriaku,
Secretary, Uganda National Examinations Board,
At the Ninth Annual International Conference of
The Association for Education Assessment.

The theme of the Conference "Assessing the Outcomes of Education - what every student should know and how to assess it" guided the choice of the title to the Paper. Uganda's Education System was damaged and retarded by the military regime of the 1970's.

About 50% of the Primary School age children go to school and of these only 20% manage to proceed to Secondary School. The ultimate number that manage to gain admission to the single University is 0.8% of these.

Curriculum provides for an innovative change within an individual. Its implementation must be adjusted to suit the individual.

Planning a curriculum necessitates its analysis as a first phase and must eventually end in its syntax before implementation.

Administrative arrangements constitute what the Director of a Curriculum must add to a planned curriculum in order to develop it.

Assessment of an individual's attainment is determined by and geared towards set objectives. Public examinations set at different levels in Uganda are confined more or less to the cognitive and affective domains of Bloom's taxonomy.

References:

1. Howard Zimmerman, "Task Reduction : A Basis for Curriculum Planning and Development for Adult Basic Education" from Readings Edited by W. Michael Brooke in "Adult Basic Education" (1972).

2. C.F. Odaet, "In-Service Training of Primary School Teachers in Uganda" (August 1982).

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4. V. Bua, "Curriculum Development" A Paper Presented to the Teachers in the Northern Region of Uganda (April 1983).

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CURRICULUM AND THE INDIVIDUAL - A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO UGANDA

1. Introduction

1.1: In my choice of the title for this paper under the general theme: "Assessing the Outcomes of Education", I was guided by the simplified form of stating the same theme: "What every student should know and how to assess it." For what every student should know is what is designed and adopted by a country as the curriculum to be followed for the education of the children of that country. The assessment of the success of that curriculum is possible only through measurement or evaluation of the impact it has made on the individual brought up through that curriculum. And hence this presentation: "Curriculum and the Individual". It is the individual who, through his education, and attainment at School, contributes towards the welfare of the society in which he lives; contributes towards the fulfilment of the aspirations and goals of our Association; and, indeed, it is for the individual that the UNESCO in its constitution asserts that it will:

> "give fresh impulse to popular education and to the spread of culture;
>
> ..... by suggesting educational methods best suited to prepare the children of the world for the responsibilities of freedom."

1.2: This paper will begin by outlining the education system in Uganda and the curriculum objectives and pursuits in its Primary and Secondary Schools. It will then strive, for the sake of further enlightening members on our situation in Uganda, to give an overview of curriculum - its meaning, planning and development before finally discussing assessment.

2. Uganda's Education System

2.1: The Education system of Governments rely heavily on educational inputs and facilities that the Governments can afford and maintain within the limits of their financial resources.

Uganda's education system today suffers from the long term wear and tear to which it was subjected through negligence, during the 8½ years of military rule; and they were crippled even further during the liberation war, from severe looting and bombing. The need for a crash programme and serious reappraisal of the education system is greatly felt and desperate. The difficulties of restoring these facilities through rehabilitation efforts made possible from both local and external resources are vast; and yet the cry remains and continues for an education system which is divorced in its philosophical cultural, and moral assumptions from that of the colonial era.

2.2: Formal education in Uganda progresses through primary, secondary, and University stages. Primary schools cater for 53% of the primary school age children and of these, only 20% manage to gain places in secondary schools, while another 5% may find out-lets in Teacher Training Colleges and Technical Schools. In terms of numbers this represents a fall-out of over 120,000 children each year. This year, for example, about 160,000 children are registered for the Primary Leaving Examination and only 40,000 of these have any hope of entering post-primary institutions at the beginning of next year. This means that 120,000 children registered for this year's examination are destined to become labourers and peasant farmers.

2.3: Secondary school education is two-tiered, and caters, during the first four years, for students aspiring to gain the Uganda Certificate of Education ('O' level); and during the next two years, for the lucky 25% who may get selected to 'A' level schools where they study to gain the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education.

2.4: Makerere University is the only University, but discussions are going on which may result in the opening of a second (Islamic) University. The annual in-take of the University caters for 25%

of 'A' level Secondary School leavers and the majority of these who go in for general degrees, graduate after three years in the University.

2.5: The Uganda Government's broad long-term objectives in the field of education are:

'(a) to make primary education available to a fast-increasing universal primary school population, in order to provide every individual with the necessary basic skills and cultural awareness for a full and productive life after school and within a dynamic and changing society;

(b) to provide sufficient manpower of the type and quality necessary to meet the manpower requirements of a rapidly expanding economy.'

In order-to-achieve the above objectives, Government has adopted strategies which are gradually opening doors for easier access to education at all levels. Post-independence and recent changes in the curricula are aimed at teaching the traditional three R's of reading, writing and arithmetic at Primary School, and, in addition, to providing basic knowledge about the social environment through subjects like science, history, geography, music, religious education, etc. At Secondary school level the curriculum is designed to strike a balance between the academic, vocational, and cultural components since schools have differing facilities, equipment and personnel. The principle underlying the O-level curriculum, for example, is that of giving, during the first two years, a broad and liberal education by creating opportunities for the children to experience, acquire skills in, and develop positive attitudes towards a wide range of activities and disciplines with special emphasis on political education and agriculture. During the next two years, the curriculum aims at placing practical subjects on the same footing as the theoretical subjects so that Secondary School Leavers are relatively complete persons in the three areas of knowledge, skills and culture.

(4)

3. Uganda's School Curriculum

3.1: While curriculum for basic education is generally accepted as a series of intended outcomes of learning designed to promote varieties of growth within an individual learner, curriculum must also be seen as an innovative provision for accommodating change - change which determines an individual's approach to life, change for example, from decades of colonial rule to the ideologies of an independent society. In Uganda, the Colonial Curriculum was geared towards training tribal Chiefs and clerical staff but today the curriculum aims not only and merely at producing experts to man and direct Government Departments and policies but also at moulding people's minds towards accepting self-employment in a rural set-up as one of the objectives for education.

In the implementation of any curriculum an attempt should always be made to analyse and reduce it to suit individuals and to ensure a wider coverage and realisation of the expected outcomes. This is because while curriculum is external to an individual, learning is always internal. Curricula are designed for groups while learning is the act of an individual and not of a group. A learner selects from what he is offered in a curriculum and he learns what he selects in the way he chooses and knows to be acceptable to himself. Therefore, because learning is essentially private and a teacher cannot control it inside an individual, it is reasonable to say that any curriculum a teacher plans or is asked to facilitate, must be defined in terms of its external role and that is, as statements of expected outcomes which anticipate learning (by an individual). In other words, while learning is taking place in an individual's mind, the final and highly conditioned version of the anticipated curriculum is being established by the individual's strategies. There is thus no such a thing as a general curriculum for a class or group as all curricula become individualized in meanings held in particular minds. Before I make my comments on the planning of

a Curriculum, allow me to digress a little by making a distinction between Learning and Education even if it is not my intention to abide by this distinction in the rest of the paper.

3.2: In the document outlining the last Five-Year Development Plan of Uganda's National Curriculum Development Centre, a distinction is made between 'lifelong education' and'lifelong learning' as follows:-

"Psychologists agree that learning is shown by a change in behaviour as a result of experience (L. Cronbach, E. Hilgard, W. Spalding). It is, however, possible to learn by adopting undesirable behaviour as a result of experience. Learning may thus produce negative results. Lifelong education, on the other hand, is conceived in terms of the infinite learning of positive knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. It is conceived in terms of acquiring knowledge that is progressively meaningful to the learner in particular and beneficial to mankind in general; skills that are marketable in the learner's society and suited to his aptitude; values that are respected in his society as well as in the international community."

This paper uses the term "learning" in the positive sense that the document I have quoted attaches to 'lifelong education'.

4. Curriculum Planning

4.1: Curriculum formats in common use are normally statements of intended outcomes and objectives. They do not go far enough in their analytical details to cater for the interests of the individual learners. But in a developing country such as Uganda, the demand for education, now suddenly re-awakened after the war of liberation, has resulted in congestion and over-flooding of classes so that however much they may be appreciated, individually planned curricula are, and will for long remain, unattainable but desirable ideals.

4.2: Planning a curriculum entails, first, its analysis inorder to reveal its implicit elements - their basic structurers, characteristics and hierachy. Isolation of the elements of a curriculum is followed, in the planning process, by syntax - putting the elements into their logical compartments or categories according to their causes-and-effects, values, priorities, and taxonomies. Thus ordered, it becomes easy for the learner to progress efficiently and effectively. The planning process should be accomplished by synthesis - the stage at which the teacher as collaborator, should attempt prescriptions aimed at enabling the individual to experience specific intended behaviours, or to imitate the original ideal of the whole.

4.3: When analysis and syntax are omitted from the planning of a curriculum, the gross tasks of learning can become frustrating and impossible to manipulate to the learner. He fails to cope with the gross increments dished out by the teacher to facilitate the learning process, and he gives up.

4.4: There are other reasons for analysing and categorising intended outcomes into their components and priorities. In the first place, the curriculum planner is able to separate basic elements from those which are essentially decorative, stylistic and non-essential; secondly, he is able to assess the needs for teaching aids add materials related to the prescriptions which can motivate the individual to cope with the increments that will form the resynthesized whole product.

5. <u>Curriculum Development</u>

5.1: The last paragraph summarises what goes into the planning of a curriculum intended for an individual in a school classroom. We should now be in a position to appreciate the statement that curriculum planning is the work of the teacher who must analyse tasks and re-group them to suit individual capabalities and interests.

5.2: Curriculum development on the other hand is different. For when one develops anything, he pushes it a stage further by discovering and promoting its potentials; and he eventually produces change. Curriculum development thus connotes change - change which to those of us involved in education, should aim at adapting the youth to the evolutionary changes within their society.

5.3: Discovering the potentials of a curriculum inorder to effect its evolution takes us back to analysis of the curriculum as already discussed. But analysis in curriculum development, aims at large goals and objectives. Its components are brought together in the process of curriculum development, and the design they form should be able to promote the curriculum which the classroom teacher and planner has attained. The success or failure of the promotion of a curriculum depends on good administrative arrangements as well as on how the curriculum Director organises his objectives to suit specific approaches to teaching, instructional methods, and techniques useful for the facilitation of the teaching - learning experiences.

5.4: Curriculum and learning are defined, controlled and measured in a relationship between Tyler's four basic classic questions:

(1) What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
(2) What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
(3) How can these educational experiences be effectively organised?
(4) How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

The answers to those questions depend on the educational designs adopted and maintained by Governments, but in all cases, the designs must be those with broadly-based programmes covering long periods of time. This is the only way to establish public confidence and make the best use of the available money, time, and other resources.

5.5: When the objectives that a curriculum seeks to attain have been identified, the question of what educational experiences are required for their accomplishment is one of organization requiring the drawing up of syllabuses offering a wide variety of electives and activities to meet student interests, needs, and capacities. Experience will also be provided by selective choice and even by simple improvisation of instructional materials. In developing a proper educational experience a deliberate effort should be made to involve a combination of traditional components and cultural values of the dominant as well as minority groups. All this goes to show that curriculum development is administratively much broader and more involved than curriculum planning.

5.6: A curriculum developer has to plan and organize the man-power resources available to him on certain principles. In a developing country like Uganda, it is an accepted practice that teachers with lower qualifications and of lower calibre are those held responsible for education at Primary School level and they do a good job. A curriculum developer should therefore steer away from the frequent assumption that because the content of the Primary curriculum is simple, anyone can handle it. At times, at least in Uganda, University or Secondary School teachers have been brought in to assist with the Primary Curriculum as experts, but, failing to understand the needs and cognitive level of Primary children, they develop text-books and teachers' guides which are manifestly inappropriate. If curriculum development connotes change, and if real change is to take place in Primary Schools, it is essential for everyone concerned to understand clearly, the role and influence of materials development, teacher training, and National examinations.

5.7: Curriculum development is accomplished when it is evaluated - "a process wherein the parts, processes, or outcomes of a programme are examined to see whether they are satisfactory, particularly with reference to the programme's stated objectives,

our own expectations, or standards of excellence". (B.W.Tuckman). Evaluation in this particular respect falls into three phases:

(1) Reflective Evaluation: the first phase which precedes the adoption of the curriculum, concerns itself with the reflection of intended objectives, the set of suggested learning experiences, and the suggested organization of these experiences.

(2) Formative Evaluation: which deals with the pioneering and innovative nature of the programme by examining "pilot", or "experimental", or "first-phase" projects with unidentified problems and uncertain outcomes.

(3) Summative Evaluation: which in good part consists of final examinations at each level of education.
Mention of this last phase of evaluation in Curriculum Development brings us to the last part of this discussion.

5. Assessment

6.1: The relevance of a curriculum can be evaluated in terms of its objectives. The assessment of the intended outcomes is also determined by certain set objectives. Our discussion of assessment must therefore start by clarifying the meaning of the term "objectives". An objective can be described as a statement of an intended outcome or prescribed characteristic, and in the specific context of instruction, the prescribed characteristic is the intended instructional outcome. Mager (1962) says that "an objective is an intent communicated by a statement describing a proposed change in a learner - a statement of what the learner is to be like when he has successfully completed a learning experience. It is a description of a pattern of behaviour (performance) we want the learner to be able to demonstrate."

6.2: Tuckman (1975, pp.25) states the values of objectives in the following terms:-

"Objectives have many values for the teacher as an instructor, primary among them being to aid the teacher as a tester. Objectives help you to determine what it is you want students to learn and, hence, what you want to measure, and suggest further

how to measure what you want to measure, whether students have achieved what is intended, areas in which your instruction has been successful and unsuccessful."

6.3: This paper has deliberetely avoided any mention of or reference to technical and vocational education or training. It will therefore confine its discussion of assessment to the taxonomies of Cognitive and Affective domains and avoid any reference to the taxonomy of psycho-motor domain although it must be pointed out that practical tests in Science subjects constitute a big element of skills assessment. Bloom's taxonomy of the Cognitive domain comprises of the familiar levels of Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation. It helps teachers to gain more insight into their goals and instructional activities so that they are better able to identify the level of their activities and move on to increasing levels of complexity. Like the taxonomy of cognitive domain, the taxonomy of the affective domain also identifies a sequence of levels that may be used for structuring instructional experiences or developing test items. This taxonomy deals with beliefs, emotions, or feelings and comprises, in its hierachy, of: Reception, Response, Evaluation, Organization and characterization. The details of the approaches to the assessment of students' affective states or attitudes at these different taxonomic levels of the affective domain can be more easily followed in published texts.

6.4: The Primary Leaving Examination in Uganda is a terminal examination not only because of the high proportion of participants but mainly because the primary system is expected to prepare children for adulthood so that they respond to local community needs and this has already been evidenced above by the large number of fall-outs at this level. The examination consists of one paper in Mathematics, one in English, another in Science, and a fourth in Social Studies and Religious Education. Each of the papers is tested by a Section A which is made up of 30 to 40 Multiple Choice

items offering four answers of which one is correct; and a Section B made up of 12 to 15 short-answer items which typically ask students to identify, distinguish, state, name, or (particularly in Maths), demonstrate something. The majority of the items written for the Primary Leaving Examination are aimed at testing for knowledge acquisition or comprehension and apart from being in the format of Multiple Choice items which are tested in Section A, they can be written in the unstructured, true-false, completion, or matching format. A few short essay-type questions are usually incorporated to test for ability in the higher taxonomic levels of analysis, synthesis and even evaluation. Evaluated as wholes, papers in the Primary Leaving Examination are always seen to comprise a major element of the cognitive domain and very little of the affective domain.

6.5: While it is generally accepted as a terminal examination the Primary Leaving Examination in Uganda enjoys prestige for being a selection examination for the few places available in Government and Private Secondary Schools. The lucky 30% of the Primary Leavers who gain admission into Secondary Schools face, after four years, the examination for the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE). All School candidates for the UCE must offer a minimum of eight subjects including English Language, a Humanities subject selected from a choice of eight subjects, Mathematics, with a choice between traditional, new, and a merger of the two, one Science subject from eight options, and at least one subject chosen from a combination of options in Cultural, Business and Technical subjects. All eight subjects offered by a candidate aim at testing for the candidate's acquisition of knowledge and comprehension, but because they comprise mainly of essay-type items, their assessment of the students concentrates more on the higher levels of the taxonomies of both cognitive and affective domains. As for the Primary Leaving Examinations, the items include those of short-answer formats although only in about a third of the subjects offered by the Examining Board.

6.6: Again, like the Primary Leaving Examination, the Uganda Certificate of Education Examination is both terminal and selective. The majority of students who complete 'O' level Secondary School education go for training in various Government Institutions while others go straight for employment in Industry and the private sector, or as clerks in Government Departments. Those who proceed to 'A' level Secondary Schools are offered a combination of either Science or Arts subjects - three or four in each case with the General Paper as a Compulsory but Subsidiary subject. All subjects offered must be taken at the examination for the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education and admission into the University is subject to a candidate obtaining at least two subject Principal passes at the grade level stipulated by each Faculty of the University. 'A' level assessment by the Uganda National Examinations Board is similar to that for 'O' level although here performance in the individual papers of a subject is taken into account in determining the level of a pass.

7. Summary

In summary, I submit that this paper set out to describe curriculum and to relate its planning and development to the individual student. Examples and references have been mentioned about the learning situation as it obtains in Ugandan schools today. And modest effort has also been made to try and relate the discussion on curriculum to the methods of assessment currently in use in Uganda.

Thank you.

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Howard Zimmerman, "Task Reduction: A Basis for Curriculum Planning and Development for Adult Basic Education" from Readings Edited by W. Michael Brooks in "Adult Basic Education" (1972).

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